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DEPARTMENT FOR A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG AND AF/RSA

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: EARLY DECISION REQUIRED ON MANPADS POLICY FOR THE  
SPLA

REF: A. 08 KHARTOUM 1512  
[1](#)B. 08 KHARTOUM 971

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (a) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) The US Departments of State and Defense will organize an air space management conference in Juba for the SPLA, tentatively planned for late February. Although DOS and DOD plan to cover topics such as air safety, air space management, and air defense, among others, the primary desire of the SPLA is to gain explicit US support for the acquisition of surface-to-air missiles or man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) that it can use to defend itself against a Growidg SAF fixed wing aircraft and helicopter capability should clashes break out between North and South Sudan. Post would like to flag this issue for early consideration by the new administration, since the SPLA/GOSS will be disappointed if the US does not directly and clearly address the issue of MANPADS, one way or the other, in its discussions with the SPLA during the February conference. For the SPLA, anything else will be viewed as avoidance of the main issue by the USG since the best weapon available to counter this air threat is a surface-to-air missile. GOSS President Salva Kiir has raised this issue with US officials multiple times over the last to years, as have other senior GOSS officials including SPLA Chief-of-Staff General Oyai Deng Ajak.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Post is well aware that US policy has been to prevent the proliferation of MANPADS lest they fall into the hands of terrorists who may use them against commercial airliners or other targets. Obviously, advocating the purchase of these weapons by the SPLA could complicate this policy objective, especially in the Horn of Africa, a breeding ground for terrorists. However, we need to provide a clear answer to the SPLA on this issue. For example, would the US support the independent purchase of these systems by the SPLA, with our knowledge and with our advice on which systems would best suit their needs? Or, based on a policy of discouraging the proliferation of these systems, would the US advise the SPLA to hold off on their purchase until there is an even greater imperative to obtain them (in other words, once war has broken out, when it may be too late?) Should the US encourage a less problematic, if less effective option, such as enhancing the SPLA's AAA ability? If the US supports the independent purchase of a limited quantity of these weapons, is there any guidance we would like to provide on procurement channels, storage/safekeeping, and training? How will the US respond if the SPLA moves forward with the purchase of these weapons without consent or guidance from US officials?

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Post encourages an early Inter-Agency policy review of this issue in advance of the February air space management conference in Juba, so that US officials may directly address the one issue that is of paramount importance to the SPLA in the context of the conference and its overall security needs.  
FERNANDEZ